

# Online gaming



**i** This fact sheet includes information for parents and carers about online gaming.

## What is online gaming?

Online gaming includes video games played over a device connected to the internet and can range from simple text based games, to games incorporating complex graphics and virtual worlds. Games can be played either solo or by many players simultaneously.

## How does it work?

Online games can be played on a range of devices, including consoles, computers, tablets and smartphones, which can have **some level of online access**. Games can also have augmented or virtual reality capabilities.

Online gaming can be a lot of fun and has many benefits for children and young people. It can help develop problem solving skills, and can encourage teamwork and creativity and creative thinking.

Many games have the ability to play single player, however **online multiplayer gaming is a popular activity** for young people.

Popular games vary across age groups and genres but can include **Minecraft, Roblox, Fortnite, Final Fantasy, Call of Duty, Animal Crossing** and **Grand Theft Auto**.

## What are the challenges?

Many games have 'in game' chat, including video, voice and text that allows players to directly communicate with each other. There are also separate apps or sites **specifically made for gaming that allow users to communicate with each other** in real time. For example, **Discord** is a popular app that allows for voice, video and live stream among users.

It is important to remember that young people who are playing multiplayer games **could be playing with people they don't know**, and could be a lot older than they are.



**Research suggests that half of 8–17-year-old have played an online game with someone they have not met in person.**

In game chat is a common method for online child sex offenders to target children. **It is important for children and young people to recognise suspicious behaviour**, which can include being asked personal questions or to move from a game to continue chatting on another app.

The best thing for children to do in these situations, is to **block the person and tell a trusted adult** straight away.



When signing up for games, young people may be asked to create a profile and username. A profile or username **can give away a lot of information including your child's name, age or location**. This information can be kept private by creating smart usernames.

- **Maintain supervision** of your child when they are playing games.
- **Consider disabling in game chat functions** if they are not critical to the game. If your child is playing games with voice chat, consider enabling the speakers so you can monitor discussions.
- Children should only play games with **people they know and trust**. However, if your child is playing multiplayer games, encourage them to keep the topic about the game only.
- To protect personal information, help your child create a smart username and **profile that gives out no personal details**. It might be a nickname or a made-up name.
- Learn how to **block and report** other players and inappropriate contact.